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ABSTRACT

University admissions policies have been subject to scrutiny and change over the last several years and have reflected, in turn, the point of view of the institution, society, and the student. This research report discusses the period of the sixties when the poles of merit versus equal opportunity shaped the admissions debate along with questions of the appropriate admissions strategy to accommodate an open door approach. The seventies, a period of decreased enrollment, is discussed in light of the demand for new strategies that have arisen to attract students to institutions. Legal issues that pose problems of constitutionality in matters of quotas and reverse discrimination are outlined. (JMF)

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University Admissions: Dilemmas and Potential

Carol Herrnstadt Shulman

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Foreword

University admissions policies have been subject to scrutiny and change over the last several years and have reflected, in turn, the point of view of the institution, society, and the student. In the sixties the poles of merit versus equal opportunity shaped the admissions debates. Then questions of the appropriate admissions strategy to accommodate an open-door approach were raised. In the seventies enrollment demands have slackened and new strategies have arisen to attract students to institutions. Legal issues also pose problems of constitutionality in matters of quotas and reverse discrimination.

All of these concerns are addressed in this research report. The author believes that admission officers have an opportunity to develop their role beyond the practical issue of filling seats in a classroom in ways that can enhance an institution's educational image. Carol Herrnstadt Shulman is a research associate at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education and has published extensively in the research report series.

Peter P. Muirhead, Director
ERIC/Higher Education

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Overview

Higher education has been identified as an important social institution because of its formative effect on the men and women who most influence our social, political, and economic development. Moreover, it is the major means by which upward social and economic mobility is achieved. In this context, the admissions process is recognized as a major link between higher education's social responsibilities and its educational goals, since the selection process is an important factor in determining the type and quality of education the student receives.

In the 1960's admissions debates centered on the selection procedures believed appropriate for meeting higher education's goals. Two major viewpoints were developed: (1) the meritocratic concept, which holds that equity in access to higher education is provided by using as criteria for admission individual qualities of academic talent and effort, with no regard for social and economic factors; and (2) the egalitarian position, which holds that the methods used for assessing academic talent and effort are inherently discriminatory for those of certain social and economic backgrounds, and that the only just way to provide equity in access is to make higher education available to all who seek it.

Recently these admissions concerns have yielded to more pragmatic discussions about how admissions decisions affect the growth and development of colleges and universities individually and in general. This shift in emphasis may be attributed largely to college administrators' increasing awareness of new demographic developments that are likely to negatively affect the size and quality of their applicant pool and consequently their admissions processes and decisions.

Contemporary admissions discussions focus on the composition and problems of the available and future applicant pool. By applicant pool is meant the group of high school seniors from which colleges and universities select their freshman classes. This pool may be considered on the national level for all higher education institutions or from the perspective of different "markets" identified by such factors as geographic region, ability level, or academic interests. Nationally, the applicant pool has declined by ability level as measured by standardized test scores. Most significantly, the decline in scores has been greatest in the upper ranges of academic ability. As costs for college

escalate, the applicant pool has been further limited by considerations of the student's ability to finance his or her own education. Recent findings suggest that there will be increasing competition among institutions for a limited number of students who meet the twin criteria of academic ability and financial strength.

In this competitive situation, many college administrators are giving increasing attention to a new concept of "marketing" in higher education that goes beyond the idea of selling a particular college education. This marketing approach is concerned with how to develop a college's educational strengths so that the program will, by itself, attract student support. To this end, the new marketing theorists recommend a realistic assessment of the college's special institutional goals, its strengths, its weaknesses, and its future potential. The emphasis here is on finding methods of satisfying the mutual needs of the student and of the institution.

In the 1970's, legal developments have complicated the process of implementing admissions policies and procedures among undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. The implementing regulations for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 apply to recruitment and admissions policies as well as financial aid practices for most colleges and universities. The regulations are designed to carry out Title IX, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal assistance. This law has not provoked any notable public discussion on its impact on institutional admissions policies and procedures at the undergraduate level.

In contrast, preferential admissions programs in graduate and professional schools have become an object of controversy and have raised questions about current institutional policies and practices. Preferential admissions programs grew out of professional schools' increasing recognition of their social responsibility to bring specific minority groups into their educational programs, and included a realization that sharply escalating admissions applications would prevent such access unless special admissions programs were begun. These programs have been challenged by rejected applicants not eligible for preferential admissions, who argue that they are better qualified than applicants accepted under special admissions guidelines. The Supreme Court will hear such a case later this year in *Bakke v. The Regents of the University of California.*

In another admissions development, student-as-consumer advocates are promoting efforts to make colleges more responsive to students' informational needs. These needs are especially great during the ap-

plication and admissions period, when students and their parents must make major decisions about how the student will invest his financial resources and personal energies for the next four years. There are indications that many institutions do not make necessary information easily accessible to students. Efforts to change this situation are both compulsory, as required by new federal regulations concerning financial aid information, and voluntary, as institutions realize that providing accurate and complete information may be an important selling point.

The shift in emphasis in admissions discussions from the broad social debates of the 1960's to the more pragmatic concerns of the 1970's may signal a reassessing of basic admissions issues in terms more appropriate to the educational realities of the 1970's. In other words, the new emphasis is on how higher education may best serve the individual student's needs rather than the needs of students as part of a particular social group.

For the future, fluctuations in enrollments and ability levels of high school graduates establish the parameters within which admissions officers and their institutions can influence the admissions process. Within these limits, however, there is opportunity to develop new approaches to admissions problems. Some innovations are underway, and the potential for new initiatives is present.

Introduction

The relationship between higher education and the nation's welfare became an important subject for public discussion during the 1960's. There was widespread recognition that higher education had a formative influence on the men and women who most affect our social, political, and economic development. Further, college and university education was viewed as the chief means of achieving upward social and economic mobility. Given this consensus on higher education's importance as a social institution, debate focused on how it could meet its social responsibilities most effectively.

In these discussions, the admissions process was identified as a major link between social responsibilities and educational goals. It was believed that since American colleges and universities differed in their educational quality, goals, and status, the selection process was perhaps the single most important factor in predicting the nature of the student's participation in society. In addition, students prevented from college attendance because of financial problems were thought to be foreclosed from further personal development and considered a loss to society. Therefore, considerable attention was given to analyzing the nature of the admissions process and to determining whether it was responsive to social needs and, if not, how it should be altered.

However, in the 1970's, discussions about the relationship between admissions and social policy are very little in evidence. Higher education analysts have instead shifted their attention to new, pressing concerns about institutional financial crises and a declining college-age population, both of which directly affect institutional survival and growth. The emergence of these new problems has also influenced the character of contemporary admissions discussions. Generally, contemporary writings on admissions are narrowly focused on how to attract students to an institution during a period of tight competition between similar kinds of colleges. The literature is pragmatic and avoids the larger debate of the relationship between admissions policies and their social consequences.

This practical focus is understandable but shortsighted. Higher education's importance as a social institution continues despite its decline from the period of euphoria and growth during the 1960's. To win public support and understanding for their educational purposes, colleges and universities must explain their activities in light of

the educational and social benefits they provide. To do otherwise—to be concerned only with "merchandising" higher education in order to win students—may decrease public support for higher education. This research report discusses the admissions concerns of the 1960's and describes their transformation in the context of changing conditions in higher education in the 1970's. It will also describe the admissions community's current efforts to deal with new kinds of admission problems.

Admissions Policies and Goals

Admissions policies are inextricably bound to educational and social goals. To the higher education community and to society the selection process is the first step toward influencing and reaching established goals. The character and quality of the students who are admitted to a particular college or university shapes its programs, influences its mission, and greatly affects its overall educational and financial viability. From the perspective of social policy analysis, admissions decisions are a major factor in determining who in society has access to the benefits of higher education and in establishing the level at which the benefits are conferred. Further, given higher education's importance as a major provider of society's leaders, the access process and admissions decisions are seen as influencing the course of the nation's social, political, and economic development.

This chapter reviews the 1960's debates on the role of admissions practices in achieving social goals. These discussions underscore the important role higher education has come to play in contemporary American society. It will also review how and why admissions literature has changed in emphasis to more pragmatic concerns in the present decade.

Social Goals of Higher Education

During the 1960's, debate centered on the role admissions played in determining social outcomes. As a result, higher education as a whole was examined in the context of the social ends it served. B. Alden Thresher, a former chairman of the College Entrance Examination Board, recognized and contributed to this awareness in *College Admissions and the Public Interest* (1966). Thresher believes that while students and institutions tend to emphasize their own particular concerns in the admissions process, this process must be understood and treated in a larger context:

> The view appropriate to contemporary thought is . . . that admissions must be looked at in the broadest possible context. The roots of higher education lie deep within the needs and aspirations of entire populations. The range of forces that determine the demand for education, regulate access to it, and define the values that maintain it, reflects some of the deepest values of the surrounding culture (Thresher 1966, p. 5).

There can be little quarrel with this evaluation of how higher edu-

cation gains support and respect. However, disagreement among higher education policy-makers surfaced over the issues of which "values of the surrounding culture" should be emphasized by the higher education community and which by those in and outside government who support that community.

As this disagreement developed, two main philosophical viewpoints were generally recognized: the "meritocratic" and the "egalitarian." Supporters of each position obviously had differing views of higher education's role in society and consequently of how access to higher education should be promoted. Logan Wilson, the president of the American Council on Education, endorsed the meritocratic system of higher education that he saw evolving and being extended to previously excluded groups in society. He believed that a meritocratic system of higher education was necessary to train students in "cognitive efficiency, intellectual competence, and specialized knowledge" (Nichols and Mills 1970, p. 30). In his view, the meritocratic system accurately recognizes the differences in human talents and capabilities:

> The functional underpinning for a meritocratic structuring of the higher learning derives logically from the fact that nobody becomes educated by inheritance, gift, or decrees. Even when provided with unrestricted opportunity, every person is limited by his own will, desires, and capabilities. The main virtue of the merit principle when applied to educational processes, however, is that it couples individual advancement with ability and effort (Nichols and Mills 1970, p. 29).

Wilson supports the extension of higher education opportunities to all who may benefit from it, but he is also reacting against an egalitarian position, which he sees as confusing "equality of opportunity" with "identity of opportunities" (p. 32). He believes the egalitarians promote access to traditional forms of higher education for all who seek it, regardless of ability. This development would impair institutional resources and dilute the quality of higher education. At the same time, he believes that society is providing equitable treatment because access to traditional higher education is continually being expanded to include all academically able students.

Advocates of an egalitarian approach have a different view of higher education as a social institution. They argue that higher edution institutions are not simply training grounds for the best and brightest in the newest generation, but that higher education:

> is the prime societal mechanism for determining who is to occupy the top and upper-middle levels of the stratification system [of society]. At stake, then, in who is given access to the university is nothing less than the distribution of privilege in contemporary America (Karabel 1972, p. 32).

Further, they contend that this mechanism is inequitable because it relies on a selection process in which merit alone is not the criterion for access: socioeconomic background also heavily determines who will attend college. Therefore, traditional admissions practices that are based on standardized test scores and high school grades help to maintain the disparities between different socioeconomic and racial and minority groups in our society (Karabel 1972). By supporting these practices colleges fail to work toward the goal of equality of opportunity in our society.

Egalitarians also argue that meritocratic admissions policies work against the achievement of educational goals. They believe that these policies select students who will invariably be successful, without regard to whether it is these students or the ones rejected who would most benefit from the education offered. When these policies are followed, the egalitarians argue, colleges harm themselves by not considering their own educational goals:

> It . . . seems clear that American colleges have pursued the use of meritocratic criteria in admissions so vigorously that the educational mission of these institutions has become blurred . . . Their mission . . . is to produce certain desirable changes in the student . . . Given these goals, they should strive in their admissions practices to select those applicants who are most likely to be favorably influenced by the particular educational program offered at the institution (Astin 1969, p. 69).

Thresher also suggests that by using traditional criteria to seek out the best students, colleges may give less consideration to how they might improve their instructional programs, since good students are likely to be successful under any circumstances. In his view "it is easy for selection to become, to a degree, a substitute for education" (Thresher 1966, p. 22).*

Selection Procedures

These debates on higher education goals occurred simultaneously with a growth in the college-going population. Using 1955 as a base year, degree credit enrollment increased 35 percent in 1960, 108 percent in 1965, and 196 percent in 1970—a total increase of more than 5 million students (Shulman 1976). As these figures suggest, college officials found that they had a greatly expanded applicant pool from

*This debate over the role of selection in the educational process continues. A forthcoming study by McClelland, Winter, and Stewart (1978) shows mixed educational results for students attending an Ivy League institution, a four-year urban college, and a junior college (Jacobson 1975).

which to choose their students. Further, this population was increasingly diversified (Fincher 1975; Manning in *Barriers to* . . . 1971). The student population was changing in ability level, educational need, values, and expectations of higher education. Such significant changes seemed to require new admissions selection procedures (Manning). The discussions resulting from this new need meshed with the ongoing debate on higher education and social goals.

To some observers the admissions process did not represent an orderly system of assigning students to institutions that would best serve them. The selection process only gave the appearance of a national system:

> It is realistic . . . to define the basic view of the admissions process as the result of a series of social forces, often blind, seldom fully understood, interacting in complex ways. Reason enters into this process, but only fitfully and partially (Thresher 1966, p. 23).

In an attempt to make the admissions process more scientific, researchers channeled their energies in several directions. One approach focused on standardized tests: efforts were made to refine them and to develop conceptual frameworks in which they could best be used. In another approach, researchers worked to develop personality and institutional assessment procedures that would assist students and institutions in achieving the best educational match. For example, Davis (1964) observes that a surplus of well-qualified applicants to an institution creates its own problems: it results in a need to use measures of selection other than standardized test scores and grades. He suggests that:

> If admissions policy is to have an acceptable impact on the institution, it should focus on applicant characteristics reflecting amenability to change . . . We have not yet defined the nature of the multifarious concomitants of intellectual growth (Davis 1964, p. 32).

However, these efforts received considerably less attention than a more radical recommendation for overhauling the admissions process: open admissions was proposed as a system for opening up higher education to all interested students who met minimal academic standards. Admissions was seen as "a means of [promoting] social equality and upward mobility through educational opportunity" (Trivett 1976, p. 1). Advocates of open admissions also agreed that colleges' educational responsibilities should enhance students' knowledge and competencies rather than to merely select those who would succeed on a college level (Karabel 1972). As a policy and as a system, open

admissions was the most direct response to the demand that higher education link its educational goals to social objectives.*

A lottery system of admissions was also proposed to achieve open admissions goals. For example, B. Alden Thresher (1966) suggested that, given students with a minimum level of academic qualifications, colleges and universities might select students from its applicant pool on a random basis:

> Then each college will be more nearly carrying its fair share of the load of providing education. It will in time come to be judged by the 'value added' to its alumni (Thresher 1966, p. 58).

Despite the potential appeal of such a system's claim to promote equity in the admissions process, it might be difficult to gain widespread public acceptance for its application. An attempt to institute a random system of admissions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign met with considerable opposition from the public and was withdrawn. A random system of admissions proposed for the 1970-1971 academic year was designed to let all applicants who met established admissions criteria have an equal chance for admission. Until then the oversubscribed campus was selecting the best-qualified students. Selection would be determined on a random basis among the applicant pool. This system was recommended because the university found that its practice of progressive admission resulted in having acceptances, denials, and deferrals extended over three admissions periods; a student could wait as long as six months before getting a negative decision. It was also believed that this new policy would result in a better socioeconomic distribution among the freshman class (Warnick 1970). When the policy resulted in the rejection of about 800 applicants to the Urbana campus's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, there was considerable public pressure to rescind it. The earlier policy was immediately reinstituted and the 800 students were granted admission (Loeb 1970).

Issues in the 1970's

In the 1970's, there has been a decided change in the issues that most concern higher education analysts and college officials who deal

*The City University of New York introduced open admissions in September 1970 and provided remedial and supportive services to diminish the potential for a high dropout rate (Trivett 1976). The university ended this policy in 1976 because of financial difficulties (Magarrell 1976). For reports on this open admissions experiment see, Rossman, et al., 1975; Kaufman, and Loveland 1975; and Kaufman, Terdeman, and Loveland 1976.

with the admissions process. The 1960's focus on the role admissions policies play in social and educational problems has been subordinated to the question of how admissions issues affect the growth and development of colleges individually or as groups of institutions. This shift in emphasis may be attributed in large part to college administrators' increasing awareness of new demographic developments that could negatively affect their applicant pool and consequently their admissions processes and decisions.

College officials became concerned with demographic information in 1972, when population reports indicated the rate of graduation from high school was stabilizing; later reports also showed that the birthrate was declining, and might reach zero population growth by the year 2000. These early warnings indicated that the potential pool for traditional college-age students would be significantly reduced over the next 30 years. By 1973, a number of institutions experienced stabilization of or losses in enrollment that were created in part by changing enrollment patterns. When the problem intensified it became clear that these trends would affect every higher education institution.

To these statistics higher education analysts add the complication of potentially important changes in the composition of the college student population. In contrast to students of the recent past, today's students reflect a wider range of demographic characteristics and academic abilities and show a greater interest in majors that provide career preparation. This new student population may seek out nontraditional or vocational curricula and new educational structures, causing them to bypass traditional institutions. Students may also weigh the cost of college attendance, especially a liberal arts education, against the difficulties of finding high-paying work after college graduation, and find the cost of college attendance too high. These considerations also may contribute to further enrollment declines at traditional institutions. (Shulman 1976).

As a result of these new conditions, college admissions practices are undergoing three distinguishable developments. *First* college admissions officers are generally directing their efforts to cultivating and maintaining an adequate pool of applicants. A recent survey documents this emphasis. When the College Entrance Examination Board surveyed a representative sample of 144 institutions that are involved in Board-supported programs and surveys, it found that most institutions agreed that the major changes for the future involved smaller applicant pools and greater competition among colleges for students. Public and private institutions considered recruitment of students a

major concern (Abernathy 1976). *Second*, higher education analysts recognize that problems in recruiting adequate numbers of students cannot be considered in a vacuum. There is a growing awareness of the need to develop and articulate institutional purposes that will appeal to prospective students.

And *third*, college officials also realize that they must know what kinds of students are realistically available to them and what these students' needs and objectives are. In this context, the social-educational goals debate of the 1960's takes on a new focus: *it has narrowed to an emphasis on the needs of the individual student rather than on the needs of entire social groups.*

The connection between applicant pools, institutional goals, students needs, and recruitment and admissions is not always clearly articulated in the writings on admissions. However, this framework is useful in understanding the climate in which pragmatic admissions issues are being discussed.

Summary

During the 1960s, higher education became identified as a major social institution. As such, the higher education community found that it had to examine its role in relationship to new social and political developments. Central to this examination was a consideration of the role admissions policies and practices had in furthering educational and social goals. Two schools of thought—"meritocratic" and "egalitarian"—developed as responses to the call that colleges and universities develop strategies for their roles as social institutions. The meritocratic position holds that traditional higher education institutions should expand avenues of access for all academically able students, and train them for productive leadership roles in society. The egalitarians contend that higher education is a major mechanism for distributing social benefits and privileges, and therefore colleges are responsible for developing new methods for increasing access to all interested students, regardless of their ability.

This debate over the appropriate admissions strategy to be used was complicated by a vastly expanded college-going population. Therefore, selection procedures were also reexamined to develop a more scientific basis for the traditional procedures employed and to create new procedures that might be more advantageous in light of the large applicant pool and new social issues.

These 1960's issues have faded with the onset of new demographic information: a stabilization and then a decline in growth among the traditional college age group, and potentially important changes in

the composition of the college student population. Consequently, admissions officers have become deeply involved in the problems of developing and maintaining an adequate applicant pool from which to select their freshman class. Admissions literature today tends to focus on pragmatic issues connected with the applicant pool problems.

There is, however, a growing recognition that colleges need to carefully consider their institutional purposes, despite the immediate press of enrollment problems. In time, a well-developed educational philosophy may serve as the most useful recruitment device. The 1970's concern with institutional purposes refocuses the earlier debate on social and educational goals; the new emphasis is on how higher education may best serve the individual student rather than students as part of a particular social group.

The College Applicant Pool

The extent and quality of the applicant pool defines the context in which admissions staffs have to function. By applicant pool is meant the group of high school seniors from which colleges and universities select their freshman classes. Further, this pool may be considered on a national level for all higher education institutions or from the perspective of different "markets" that are identified by such factors as geographical region, socioeconomic background, ability level, or academic interests.

This chapter will examine specific issues that come under the rubric of "applicant pool": ability level, financial problems, and the marketing process directed toward developing and understanding applicant pools. It will also discuss the problems of formulating institutional policy in light of the information yielded about the college-bound population.

Ability Levels

In recent years, the general press and higher education researchers have given considerable attention to changes in the range of student ability levels that have occurred among college-bound high school students. These changes have been noted in declines in the average scores on standardized tests, and research and speculation have been generated over why this decline developed and what its implications are for higher education.

The causes of this decline may remain undetermined for some time,* but information has been developed about when and what kinds of changes have occurred in the applicant pool. McCandless (1975) reviewed Scholastic Aptitude Test score averages from 1956-57 through 1973-74 and found that the decline in scores began about 1964. Until then, verbal and mathematical score averages had been on the rise: verbal scores rose from 473 in 1956-57 to 478 in 1962-63; mathematical scores rose from 496 to 502 in the same years. In 1963-64, however, the verbal score average was 475, while the mathematical

*A major effort focusing on this problem was launched by the College Entrance Examination Board. Its report is due in spring 1977. A progress report from the chairman of The Advisory Panel on Score Decline (Wirtz 1976) suggests, however, that this panel's report may be inconclusive. It may recommend that further research be sponsored to continue the investigation into the causes of the decline.

score was 498. This downward trend has continued. For 1973-74, the verbal average was 440 and the mathematical was 478.

These changes in score averages developed over a period of time in which there was a major expansion of the college-going population and in which the debate over meritocratic versus egalitarian admissions policies took place. McCandless observes that during the phase in which scores were on the rise, the increases in the college-going high school population occurred among students of high ability: in the high school class of 1956, about two-thirds of the men and one-half of the women in the upper 30 percent of academic ability went directly to college; by 1961 these figures were up to three-fourths of the men and two-thirds of the women. McCandless suggests that this trend occurred under the influence of the meritocratic philosophy. At the same time, there was no general increase of all high school students going to college. Instead, there was a smaller percentage of less able students continuing to college (McCandless 1975); overall, there was an increase in the average ability level of the college-going population. After 1961, the increases in college-bound students rose for all ability levels, but also continued to yield talented students, although the egalitarian rather than meritocratic philosophy was more dominant (McCandless 1975).

Within the overall score decline trend, McCandless notes the sharpest declines occurred in the period from 1969 to 1973 (the scores held steady at the 1973 level for 1974 graduates). These declines occurred while there was a stabilization and decline in the college-going population. McCandless finds that decreases in full-time college attendance for this period have occurred among all income groups, but that decreases have been largest among students from families with incomes in the range of $7,500 to $14,999.

Other reports note that the college-going population has been changing because of increasing attendance among students whose lack of academic success and poor socioeconomic background would not have suggested college enrollment as a viable alternative in the past. K. Patricia Cross (1971) identifies these new students as "those scoring in the lowest third among national samples of young people on traditional tests of academic ability" (p. 13). They are further distinguished from more traditional students by their inability to learn well from traditional classroom teaching methods.

Within the overall figures for scores declines there are important shifts in the levels of ability that are represented by the current college-going population. A study by the Consortium on Financing

Higher Education (COFHE 1976) shows differential declines among score ranges, with the high-ability levels showing the greatest losses:

Cumulative SAT Verbal Score Distributions for High School Seniors, 1972-1975

SAT SCORES	1972	1973	1974	1975	% Decline 1972-1975	% Decline 1974-1975
750-800	2,817	1,793	2,305	1,937	-31%	-16%
700-800	17,560	12,537	14,677	11,380	-35%	-22%
650-800	53,794	39,779	43,393	33,457	-38%	-23%
600-800	116,630	98,256	98,766	79,133	-32%	-20%
550-800	218,202	185,066	185,130	156,693	-28%	-15%

(COFHE 1976, p. 9)

By the numbers of students involved and by the percentage of the declines, these figures are significant. Furthermore, as McCandless observes, while the declines in score averages from year to year may not appear to be substantial, they are important in what they represent when broken down by ability level (McCandless 1975, p. 9; see also Peng 1977).

As the average SAT scores change and decline, college admissions officers may find it even more difficult to assess the academic abilities of a particular applicant against an earlier class of freshmen. Their evaluation task may be even further complicated by problems with the other traditional tool of admissions work: high school grades. Recent information suggests that while standardized test scores have declined, high school grade averages have increased. Astin and others (1977) note an increase of 1.4 percent in "A" high school averages from 1976 college freshmen over 1975 students, and a 6.2 percent increase from 1969 to 1976 freshmen. Broudy (1977) also observes these increases, basing his study on information reported from about 750,000 students taking the SATs who submitted information on their grade-point average. He finds a "small but consistent increase in the average grade-point average . . . beginning with a GPA of 3.04 in 1973 . . . and most recently, a 3.12 in 1976" (Broudy 1977). Astin suggests that this information reveals a decline in grading standards since the late 1960's in view of the concurrent declines in standardized test scores ("Secondary School Grade . . ." 1977). Similar difficulties with evaluating the abilities of high school students may be responsible in part for the College Board's decision to make an objective short-answer

test of standard written English a separate but permanent adjunct to the SAT. Further, in December 1977, a 20-minute centrally-graded essay section will be added to the present all-objective English Composition Achievement Test. The board believes these changes will aid college officials in admissions and placement decisions (Marland 1976).

Financial Considerations in Admissions

The reports of declines in students' levels of ability as measured by standardized test scores suggest that colleges are facing increased competition for academically able students. Their competitive positions are further augmented by their need to develop a freshman class whose financial aid requirements do not overtax the limited financial aid resources of the institution. For many institutions, particularly private colleges and universities that seek students of middle- and upper-level abilities, this task is becoming increasingly difficult.

Recent findings indicate that there is a very limited pool of high-ability, upper-middle-income students who can afford to attend selective institutions without financial aid. Doermann (1976) reports that 1976 high school graduates from families with incomes over $25,000 and scoring between 450 and 800 on the verbal SAT constitute only about 9 percent of all high school graduates. Furthermore, college admissions officers who hope to attract students from the high-ability, high-income cohort to their institution will find that this group is already well mined for potential college enrollees: 239,000 students from families with incomes over $25,000 and scoring above 450 on the verbal SAT are estimated to be enrolled in college; only about 48,000 from this category of 1976 high school graduates are not enrolled in college (Doermann 1976). Therefore, it is likely that increases in the enrollment of this group of students at one institution means a corresponding decline in such enrollment at similar institutions (Doermann 1976).

Doermann also suggests that his analysis of the relationship between income and ability deflates the claim of some admissions officers that they could attract more students of high ability to their institution if they had more financial resources available: "at the higher aptitude levels . . . there are more than twice as many high school graduates in the top two quintiles of family income [$19,100 to $25,000; and $25,000 and over] as in the bottom two quintiles [less than $8,680; and $8,680 to $14,100]" (Doermann 1976, p. 10). In other words, the students of high ability are also likely to have the necessary financial resources for attendance.

However, another recent study suggests that more financial aid resources would encourage high-ability, high-income students to enroll at private institutions. The Consortium on Financing Higher Education, an association of prestigious, highly selective private colleges and universities, analyzed applicant and admissions experiences of its member institutions for the class of 1979 to learn about their ability to attract and enroll students from diverse backgrounds (COFHE 1976). The COFHE study uses data supplied by the College Board's summary reports, which are statistical profiles of students who have expressed an interest in applying to a particular institution. These profiles are based on SAT scores and the students' self-reported Student Descriptive Questionnaire. The Consortium also reports to the Educational Testing Service information on its "SAT filers": those who applied, those who were accepted, and those who enrolled at its institutions. This last group is further broken down by financial need, sex, and ethnic background. The information developed from these three sources is the statistical basis for this report.

COFHE institutions' freshmen represent a good sampling of the high-ability, high-income pool of students. The Consortium had 69,562 applicants for its 1975 entering class. By ability levels, its applicant pool represented 40 percent of the national applicant pool of students with Verbal SAT scores of 600 or more. On family income, the study does not break down the percentage of applicants or enrolled freshmen by income groups, but it does report that the average family income of enrolling freshmen in 1975 was $27,900 (male) and $27,500 (female), increases of 18 and 19 percent, respectively, over 1974.

The COFHE study finds that lack of financial aid to accepted students deters them from enrolling. For 1975, the "yield rate," i.e. students accepted for admissions who actually enrolled, decreased in all categories of financial need over 1974, except for those students who had no financial need; these students' yield rate actually increased from 4 to 76 percent in 1975. Furthermore, the yield rate was lowest among students whose expected parental contribution was $4,000 or more and who might only receive a self-help financial-aid package. Average family income for these students is high (about $29,000) but the yield rate was only 51 percent. In contrast, students with an expected parental contribution of less than $2,000 had the second highest yield rate at 63 percent (COFHE 1976). The study concludes that although by other measures the member institutions:

> held steady or improved slightly their position in the student market . . .

> the continued low yield rate among students with moderate or low financial need underlines the concern raised in the Class of 1978 study that financial aid policies, including student self-help expectations, are a financial deterrent to this group (COFHE 1976, p. iii).

This concern over the role of financial aid packages in students' decisions about which college to attend has attracted attention from the admissions community in the debate over merit versus need-based scholarships. In general, financial aid to students is determined by an assessment of what the difference will be between their college monetary needs for the academic year and the amount of funds they can contribute from all their financial resources. This is the need-based approach to awarding aid. In contrast, merit-based or no-need scholarships are offered without regard to the student's potential financial contribution and are based on such criteria as demonstrated academic ability or athletic achievement.

Given the increasing competition for talented students, some admissions personnel see the recent use of merit scholarships in financial aid programs as attempts to buy students for institutions. Haines (1976) argues that no-need scholarships are disguised as recognition for academic achievement or help for the middle-class student, their real purpose being to win students away from other, more attractive institutions and to enlarge a college's applicant pool by holding out the hope of a no-need scholarship. He offers eight reasons for his opposition to no-need scholarships: (1) they erode the principle that students should choose their college for educational rather than financial inducements; (2) they ignore the idea that limited funds should be used to support college attendance by students who could not otherwise enroll; (3) they reject the concept that, wherever possible, college education should be made available to students of all socioeconomic levels; (4) they weaken the belief that academic achievement should be its own reward; (5) they "contradict the thrust and the policy statements of the major needs analysis services, as well as most state and federal financial aid programs" that propose to help equalize the cost of various alternatives for needy families (Haines 1976, p. 3); (6) they damage the image of higher education by making it appear "that education is being discounted as if it were an overstocked commercial product; they also "raise questions about the real value of a college education, or at least about the pricing policies of colleges that seem to have excess funds to distribute to the sons and daughters of surgeons"; (7) they are not economically viable in the long run because widespread bidding for students can be of advantage only to wealthier institutions, which must use merit scholarships; and (8) if no-need

rewards are given in recognition of academic achievement, then institutions should award them without regard to admissions to the institution.

There may be some question, however, about how need-based scholarships are used. Ruth (1976) contends that the need-based approach is flawed because institutions with greater financial resources are at an advantage with the need-based concept: (1) expensive institutions may give large monetary awards to students to attend their colleges, when these students might otherwise attend a less expensive school; and (2) some institutions may give a greater need-based award than necessary to entice a student to enroll. Further, he notes that need-based as well as merit awards may attract students to institutions that are not educationally appropriate for them if one institution offers need awards larger than other institutions a student has applied to.

In support of merit scholarships, a spokesman for a large public institution argues that outstanding academic achievement deserves recognition, especially at a time when there appears to be increasing indifference to such accomplishment (Seeley 1976). As the director of admissions for Michigan State University, Seeley is involved in the administration of both need-based and merit awards. During the 1975-76 academic year, Michigan State awarded $3,000,000 in scholarship assistance, of which about $500,000 was awarded without regard to need. Within this group, several kinds of scholarship programs are available: one full-expense program is privately supported, and the other merit scholarships award minimal amounts of aid. Therefore, Seeley contends that the merit awards given at Michigan State are not of such significant amounts that they need to be offset by increases in tuition for all students or that they constitute a financial drain on other elements of campus life. He further comments that the merit-award system has not deprived students who can demonstrate need of financial aid.

Similar arguments on both sides of this issue have been raised in the debate over whether athletic scholarships should be awarded. However, here large amounts of money are at stake as well as considerable institutional prestige. Advocating the abolition of such awards, Richard W. Lyman (1976), president of Stanford University, notes that the athletic scholarships contravene the major national thrust of equality of educational opportunity because they do not effectively use limited resources; further, they now foster a greater financial burden on institutions because of federal requirements to provide equity for women students in athletics. He also suggests that, due to the National

Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) strictures on athletic scholarships, the needy athlete may actually receive less assistance than a comparable student who receives a need-based aid package. Finally, he believes that institutions could realize considerable savings if no-need athletic scholarships were abolished: Stanford estimates it would save between $120,000 to $150,000 per year.

Opposing this position, Edmund P. Joyce (1976), executive vice-president of the University of Notre Dame, contends that intercollegiate football and basketball at major levels of competition should be considered exceptions to the need-based approach because they produce substantial revenues for their institutions, which are then used to support many student activities. Competition for athletes through athletic scholarships is part of this situation, and the NCAA is making efforts to control competition by supplying guidelines. He also observes that the financial need-analysis systems are imperfect, and many moderate income families would resent being subject to need-based awards and having to pay more than they now do for college when their child's athletic ability is a significant contribution to the institution. He further suggests that any savings resulting from the need-based approach would be small because many of the players actively recruited through athletic grants would require significant amounts of need-based funds in any case.

Recruitment and Marketing

For higher education planners, the information available on the national pool of students establishes the parameters within which they can develop their admissions program and plan for institutional growth. Even though this information will alert planners to the problems and possibilities of the national applicant pool, the information may be of limited assistance. Given the stabilization and declines in the numbers of potential college-age students (see chapter 1), institutional planners need to focus on their competitive position relative to their ability to enroll adequate numbers of students. They should seek advice, tailored to their own mission, about how to attract and enroll students at their colleges.

Some efforts to attract students have had unpleasant overtones, especially when they imply that higher education is for sale to any student willing to buy it, regardless of ability, needs, or interests. Some institutions have resorted to gimmickry in efforts to attract students. These include such tactics as: awarding tuition gift certificates; hiring airplanes to drop helium balloons containing scholarship certificates and campus maps (Lanouette, quoting Haines, 1976);

passing promotional frisbees to vacationing students in Fort Lauderdale; and sending first-contact letters to students recommended by alumni, informing the prospective students that they will be accepted (Kotler 1976).

A new approach to attracting students to institutions based on marketing strategies is growing in respectability in the higher education community and becoming more refined in its philosophy and its techniques. Kotler (1976) defines marketing as:

> human activity undertaken to satisfy some set of needs through exchange processes. In the college context, we recognize the existence of needs and wants in young adults and others for a higher education. We also recognize the existence of suppliers who provide higher education services at a cost to consumers. *Marketing describes the activities of both buyers and sellers, in this case students and colleges, in searching for suitable ways to satisfy their respective requirements* (pp. 55-56, emphasis added).

In Kotler's view this marketing process is implemented by the admissions staff, but the services the institution offers should grow out of a carefully formulated institutional purpose and a development plan. These major responsibilities lie with the institution's president and board of trustees; it is with them that the marketing process begins.* The administration:

> should set forth specific educational objectives and philosophies and avoid vague generalities . . . It should define a distinct posture of the college relative to other colleges. The education buyer should be able to tell how well the college is likely to meet his or her particular educational needs and desires (Kotler 1976, p. 57).

In addition, Kotler sees "portfolio planning" as a second step in the college marketing process that must occur before the admissions office begins its task. Such planning involves a careful evaluation of the "current and future viability" of programs the institution offers based on their own merits and on their place in the overall educational pro-

*It is uncertain to what extent college officials understand or abide by the concept that recruitment should be linked to educational objectives. Clearly, recruitment activity itself is on the rise. In a survey of 144 institutions, conducted by the College Board, more than 60 percent of the respondents reported that their admissions office responsibilities were changing. Private institutions in particular reported an increasing and sometimes primary emphasis on recruiting over admissions decisions (Abernathy 1976). This finding is supported by Bowen and Minter's 1975 and 1976 surveys of private institutions. In the 1975 study, the authors found that there had been a 27 percent increase in the number of admissions staff employed since 1969. The 1976 study notes that in its report one year before, the ratio of admissions personnel to freshmen admitted was 1:82; in 1976 the ratio dropped to 1:74.

gram, and taking into consideration the development of new programs that will add to the school's growth (Kotler 1976, p. 60). After these steps occur, the admissions staff is responsible for carrying out the following: applicant development; applicant evaluation and modification; recruitment effort evaluation; college improvement planning; and alumni loyalty development (Kotler 1976, p. 57).

One aspect of the marketing process implied by the Kotler article but not directly discussed is the institution's need to assess its current position with students: What are the positive and negative factors that enter into a student's decision to apply and to enroll at a particular institution? In trying to answer these questions, Sullivan and Litten (1976) discuss the procedures they followed in obtaining market information for Carleton College and the subsequent benefits for admissions and enrollment planning that were gained. Their findings are important for other institutions besides Carleton because they demonstrate the extent and depth of information an institution can learn about itself.

The authors began with two basic research questions: In what ways is the market of potential students segmented? and What aspects of the college's recruitment effort are most and least effective? (Sullivan and Litten 1976, p. 87). Their research is based on survey information gathered from 559 students who had had some contact with the college but had not applied, and 896 of the applicants accepted for admissions to Carleton for the 1974-1975 academic year. On the first question the researchers found that the nonapplicants were similar to the applicants as measured by SAT scores, class rank, and family income, and they also attended institutions similar to Carleton. However, they differed from applicants in their perceptions of cost and location considerations. Sullivan and Litten report their data show "that Carleton occupies a precarious position in the two markets made up of students from the midwestern and eastern regions." For midwestern students, the location and academic reputation are attractions but the college is too costly for many of them. On the other hand, more eastern students can afford the costs but Carleton's reputation is not as high as that of some other eastern colleges; also its rural midwestern location is seen as a disadvantage (1976, p. 94).

On the second question, the authors examined what factors influenced students to enroll who were accepted. They found traditional recruiting techniques such as contacts with admissions personnel and campus visits could equally influence students either positively or negatively, depending on the quality of the student's experience. Financial aid considerations were also an influence on the decision to

enroll; the importance of this category increased significantly between 1974 and 1975. For 1974 entering freshmen, the rejection of a financial aid request lowered the yield rate by 26 percent; in 1975, this figure jumped to 51 percent (Sullivan and Litten 1976).

College administrators may also find assistance in planning their enrollment program by using some technical tools. These tools do not require the use of Kotler's concepts but they clearly could be used in conjunction with his approach. Doermann (1976), for example, has developed tables that enable administrators to estimate the applicant pool available based on aptitude and family income. These tables are also helpful when considering the effect tuition costs and rates of increase in tuition costs have on the size of the applicant pool. To demonstrate how his tables might be used, Doermann proposes the following example:

> [a college] *seeking an abler student body, wishes to consider raising the effective minimum verbal aptitude of its entering freshmen during the next two years. How much smaller is the defined national candidate pool if 450 is set as the effective minimum SAT-verbal score target for 1978, compared with 400 in 1976?* (emphasis in original, Doermann 1976, p. 26).

Based on tables for all 1976 and 1978 high school graduates that describe verbal aptitude scores and family income levels, Doermann concludes that this college's new policy would result in a 35 percent reduction of all high school graduates in the applicant pool (Doermann 1976).

In another self-help approach, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO 1970) developed a manual for use in planning and implementing admissions, financial aid, and registration programs. The manual is directed at predominantly black colleges characterised by: "1. small to medium enrollments (500 to 1,500 students); 2. limited graduate, research, and community service programs; 3. reliance on tuition and fee income for the major portion of operating revenues; 4. high percentage of students receiving financial aid; 5. increasing competition from other institutions for the types of students they have traditionally attracted" (NACUBO 1970, p. 1-1). The manual provides sample forms to be used and suggests deadlines by which steps in a plan should be completed. It also offers advice on step-by-step procedures to be followed in developing and analyzing an admissions program. For example, it suggests that an institution review its long-range admissions plan for such criteria as: enrollment projections by program, sex, and class; institutional policies concerning percentage distribution between full- and part-time stu-

dents, and residential and commuting students; program development; desired student body mix; recruitment policies; and financial aid policies.

Notification of Admission

Many current admissions issues center around the problems of the applicant pool, but one procedural problem in admissions has received some attention recently: what policy should institutions follow for deadlines on notification of admissions and the student reply date? Institutions now use one of three procedures to notify students of their acceptance, rejection, or waiting list status. For the student, the lack of uniformity among institutions with regard to these procedures may pose problems in deciding whether to accept one institution's offer before hearing from other colleges. The three procedures are:

(1) *Rolling admissions* — The college starts to admit and reject students as soon as it receives their completed applications, or after a certain number of completed applications have been collected. within this category, there are two kinds of rolling admissions: (a) rolling forced admissions, by which students are notified of the admissions decision and are given a very limited time in which to act upon it, *e.g.* two or four weeks; (b) rolling delayed admissions, under which practice students are given until May 1 to act, regardless of when they were notified of the admissions decision.

(2) *Delayed or precipice admissions*—The college releases all of its decisions on admissions, rejections, and waiting list candidates in the middle of April and asks students to reply on or about May 1. Generally, this practice is followed by highly selective institutions (Sider 1976).

(3) *Early decision plan* — A student applies to the institution of first choice by November 1 and generally receives a decision by about December 1. The applicant must make a decision on attendance and submit a nonrefundable deposit by the middle of December (Cashwell 1976).*

This mix of procedures also presents financial problems for the student. Most significantly, early decisions on admissions, as under the rolling admissions plan, are generally not accompanied by a de-

*Currently, the rolling admissions practice seems to dominate the admission field. The College Board's survey of 144 institutions revealed that about 92 percent of the public institutions, 65 percent of the private institutions, and about 25 percent of the private institutions used rolling admissions (Abernathy 1976).

cision on financial aid. If a student decides to accept such an offer, he must act without knowing whether he will receive aid or whether another institution will offer aid. Further, he must bind his acceptance with a sometimes substantial, nonrefundable deposit. Precipice admissions offers generally include a decision on financial aid but come relatively late in the year (Sidar 1976). In addition, complete information on financial aid packages may not be available until summer because institutions may not know about the availability of federal funds until that time (Cashwell 1976).

One writer concerned with this situation reports that a College Board survey of institutions participating in either the early decision plan or the precipice plan (here referred to as the Candidate's Reply Date) revealed that 90 percent of 278 responding institutions favored a uniform reply date of May 1. Of those who preferred another date, 48 percent opted for the period between February 1 and April 1, while the period of May 15 to July 1 was favored by 40 percent (Cashwell 1976). The survey also pointed up the problems involved in making decisions on financial aid packages early in the year, and suggested that some institutions are not adhering to the Candidate's Reply Date agreement. In light of the issues raised by the current system's reply date requirements, Cashwell (1976) suggests that institutions develop an alternative system for determining the status of their new student admissions. They might request students to indicate their status by returning a checklist that offers as choices: (1) will not attend if admitted to school of first choice; will let you know by the Candidate's Reply Date; (2) plan to enroll and will send money by the reply date; (3) want to come, but cannot decide for financial reasons—will let you know when my financial aid package arrives; (4) am going elsewhere.

Implications of Current Admissions Problems

The problems currently faced by admissions personnel cannot be resolved by them alone. Changes in the demographics of the applicant pool present most institutions with new realities over which no group of college officials has any influence; for example, the declining number of high school graduates and the downward trend in standardized test scores. Further, admissions personnel are not directly responsible for college costs or the amount of financial aid they have available. Instead, their prime responsibility may be to develop effective working relationships with other parts of their campus community to plan academic programs that will attract the best possible applicant pool. In other words, admissions officials may best aid their recruitment

efforts by applying the marketing concepts suggested by Kotler to their own context.

Admissions staff that recommend this method of improving their applicant pool and their enrollment position may face the charge from administrators and faculty that such improvements would occur anyhow if admissions staff were competent. To deal with this response, admissions personnel may first have to educate their colleagues on current and future demographic problems. If a marketing approach is accepted, admissions personnel may then become more involved in the formulation of institutional policy and development. Other administrators may turn to them for their knowledge in assessing students' interests, needs, and decisionmaking patterns. The admissions staff's analysis of these matters may be a deciding factor in an institution's development of its market position, i.e. it's educational mission, program offerings, and costs.

Summary

Contemporary admissions discussions focus on understanding the changing pool of college applicants and developing strategies for effective admissions staff management to cope with this pool. Two primary concerns about the characteristics of the applicant pool are described: changes in the range of ability levels as measured by standardized test scores and the relationship between ability levels and family income. On the first question, research indicates that there has been a decline at the higher ability levels since 1964. To date, the reasons for this decline have not been determined. The second issue, ability to finance a higher education, most directly affects private institutions, particularly those who have traditionally attracted high-ability students. These students are predominantly from upper-income families; however, the high cost of private education coupled with limited financial aid may deter them from enrolling in selective private colleges. Admissions staffs find that their applicant pool of able students has narrowed because of these factors.

Moreover, 1970's figures on the current and future numbers of 18-to-22 year olds further shrinks the college applicant pool. Institutions find themselves in tighter competition with each other for a limited number of applicants. To cope effectively with this situation, some theorists have developed new marketing concepts. These concepts are not directed to merely selling a product—in this case a college education—at a certain school but are concerned with how to develop that product so that it will, by itself, attract student support. To accomplish this, the new marketing theorists recommend a realistic

assessment of the college's special institutional goals, its strengths, its weaknesses, and its future potential.

Admissions officers may find their greatest tool to influence the character of the institution they serve is new marketing strategies. They have no control over the national applicant pool and limited influence over their institution's financial aid position; however, they can alert their institutions to the dangers inherent in the current applicant pool and point out to them the possibility of using marketing techniques to meet realistically any immediate or long-range enrollment fluctuations.

Legal Problems in Admissions

In the 1970's, legal trends have complicated the implementation of admissions policies and procedures, which, in turn, affect undergraduate, graduate, and professional school education. This chapter considers two enrollment issues that have attracted considerable attention: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and preferential admissions programs for professional schools.

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal assistance. It has not provoked any notable public discussion about its impact on institutional admissions policies and procedures but it does impose new requirements on the admissions office.

Title IX's implementing regulations ("Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex" 1975) apply to recruitment and admissions policies and practices with certain exceptions: private colleges or the undergraduate unit of a private university (§86.15d), and any public undergraduate institution that "traditionally and continually from its establishment has had a policy of admitting only students of one sex" (§86.15(e)). The regulation writers take into consideration that some single-sex institutions are in the process of becoming coed, so special provisions are made to accommodate that eventuality. Private colleges engaged in this process are subject to this consideration (§86.16 and §86.17). Such institutions are required to submit "transition plans that spell out any problems they face in admitting students without discrimination on the basis of sex and that detail the steps being taken to overcome these problems, including a timetable for the implementation of these steps. Further, the plan must include "estimates of the number of students, by sex, expected to apply for, be admitted to, and enter each class during the period covered by the plan" (§86.17 (b) (5)).

In recruitment as well as admissions, institutions are prohibited from following any practices that have a discriminatory impact on either sex. Thus, institutions may not establish numerical or percentage quotas for either sex in determining who may be admitted (§86.21(b)(i)), nor may they allow familial, parental, or marital status to affect an admissions decision (§86.21 (c)(1)).

The regulations also detail criteria for equitable distribution of financial aid. Because of the close connection between admission acceptances and financial aid packages, these provisions may also influence the admission process. Under the financial aid provisions, "students [must be] selected for award of financial assistance on the basis of non-discriminatory criteria and not on the basis of availability of funds restricted to members of a particular sex" (§86.21 (c) (1)).

In the analysis preceding the regulations, the government explains that under this requirement institutions must rank their students for assistance according to nondiscriminatory criteria, such as academic merit or financial need, and must award funds based on this ranking. If in the process of allocating funds the institution finds itself left with only sex-restrictive funds to award, while there still remain members of the opposite sex who are due assistance, the institution must then "locate additional funding for [the opposite sex] or cease to give awards at that point" ("Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex," 1975, p. 24129).

Preferential Admissions

In the 1970's, professional schools such as law and medicine have been at the center of discussion on the social responsibilities of higher education institutions. Like undergraduate institutions ten years ago, these schools are regarded as a major means to upward social mobility because they act as gateways to highly respected and lucrative careers. Furthermore, professional schools have a major responsibility to society to provide competent practitioners in essential service areas.

These responsibilities have been complicated by an increasing number of applicants to professional schools. Generally, they are well-qualified; however, student spaces are limited. For example, for the 1973-74 freshman year, there were 40,507 applicants for 14,507 places in medical schools (Chaisson 1976). Again, like undergraduate institutions a decade ago, the professional schools are faced with the problem of reconciling selection procedures with educational and societal goals.

In response to this situation, most professional schools have developed special admissions programs for disadvantaged applicants who otherwise might not be competitive. These special programs may differ in their definition of "disadvantaged" and in the strategies used to implement the program, but they hold in common certain reasons why they are necessary to the professional schools in the 1970's. *First,* the schools generally recognize that students admitted under the

preferential admissions programs are in any case qualified for their chosen studies. Even so, socioeconomic and cultural disadvantages place them in an unfavorable competitive position. The programs are therefore intended to right this imbalance.

Secondly, the professional schools charge that they have a responsibility to open up their fields to certain groups in society that have been historically underrepresented. Such an achievement would fulfill two social goals: it would provide upward social mobility for specific racial and ethnic students and it would eventually result in better services to deprived communities. The professional schools contend that students admitted under preferential admission programs are more likely to practice in these communities than those admitted through the general admissions competition. The University of Washington law school's statement on this point is not atypical:

> Because certain ethnic groups in our society have historically been limited in their access to the legal profession and because the resulting underrepresentation can affect the quality of legal services available to members of such groups, as well as limit their opportunity for full participation in the governance of our communities, the faculty recognizes a special obligation in its admissions policy to contribute to the solution of the problem (cited in Paulsen 1974, p. 919).

And finally, it is hoped that students admitted through these programs can contribute to the vitality of the school as a whole by virtue of their different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and can provide new perspectives on professional concerns.

However, despite good intentions, preferential admission programs have come under attack due to the fierce competition for admittance to professional schools. As a result of these programs, students with better dossiers measured by traditional criteria may have been denied admittance so that less competitive students may enter. Two major legal challenges against preferential admissions have been launched. In *DeFunis v. Odegaard* (416 U.S. 312 (1974)), a rejected white law school applicant charged that the University of Washington's law school preferential admission program unconstitutionally discriminated against him because of his race. The trial court upheld his argument and ordered him admitted to the law school. By the time the Supreme Court heard the case, it had been agreed that DeFunis, then in his third year, would be allowed to graduate from the law school, whether or not the decision was in his favor. With this consideration in mind, the high court held the case moot, thereby leaving the legal status of special admissions programs unclear.

The preferential admissions issue did not die with the DeFunis case. *Bakke v. the Regents of the University of California* (553 P. 2d 1152) is scheduled for argument before the Supreme Court during the fall term; it is hoped that the decision in this case will more clearly define the constitutional status of preferential admission programs. So far, court challenges to preferential admissions programs involve state-supported schools only.

In *Bakke*, a rejected white applicant charged he was qualified to be admitted to the University of California at Davis' medical school and was rejected because of his race. This rejection, he alleged, constituted invidious racial discrimination under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment; by traditional criteria, his combined admissions scores were higher than those of some minority applicants admitted under a special admissions program. The California State Supreme Court found that the special admissions program violated the constitutional rights of nonminority members under the 14th Amendment because "it affords preferences on the basis of race to persons who, by the University's own standards, are not as qualified for the study of medicine as nonminority applicants denied admission" (§553 P. 2d at 1155). It sent the case back to trial court for rehearing on the question of whether Bakke would have been admitted to the medical school if no special admissions programs had been in effect. The Regents have appealed this decision to the Supreme Court.

In making its determinations, the California court rejected the university's rationale for preferential admission programs along with the university's contention that special criteria might be justifiably employed in making admission decisions. The university had held that the special program was necessary to integrate the medical school and the profession,* to create an atmosphere of awareness in the school of the minority community's medical needs; and to encourage assistance for these needs. It further argued that minority doctors will provide role models for their racial group and can be expected to serve in their own communities.

In the University of California at Davis' regular and special admissions program, candidates are assigned a combined admissions score on a scale of 500 based on a host of considerations: evaluation of the in-

*This view is supported by the deans of the four publicly supported law schools in California in *amicus curiae* brief filed with the Supreme Court. They charged that if the California decision was upheld "the movement of minority groups to meaningful representation" in the legal profession would be at an end. ("Court Takes Reverse Bias School Case," *The Washington Post*, February 23, 1976, p. 1).

formation in the application, letters of recommendation, the interview summary, test scores, and grade-point averages.* Also, consideration is given to motivation, character, imagination, and the type of practice the applicant plans to enter and where he will serve. In Bakke's case, he received scores that were sometimes 20 to 30 points higher than those of disadvantaged applicants in the special admissions program.

The special admissions program was begun in 1969 for disadvantaged applicants and each year through 1974 had admitted 16 racial minority applicants. (No disadvantaged white applicants have been admitted under this program.) These applicants are considered separately from those in the regular admissions program. They are first screened to determine that their "disadvantaged" classification is appropriate. The applicant's dossier then is reviewed to see if an interview is appropriate. A low grade-point average does not automatically disqualify an applicant for an interview. In contrast, a grade-point average below 2.5 (on a scale of 4.0) would disqualify a regular admissions candidate. After the interviews are conducted, the special admissions committee prepares summaries of the qualifications of the applicants it is recommending and submits these to the regular admissions committee. Generally, the special committee's recommendations are followed.

Criteria for Professional School Admissions

DeFunis and *Bakke* have fostered much discussion of how professional school admissions should be conducted and what role the courts should play in establishing admissions policy and procedures. (Paulsen 1974; Redish 1975; O'Neil 1974; "*DeFunis* Symposium" 1975; Bloom 1974). It is worth keeping in mind that a Supreme Court decision on professional school admissions may apply to admissions at the undergraduate and graduate school levels as well.

Several commentators have looked at court cases dealing with academic decision-making and developed assessments of what they believe institutional admissions policies should be and what they foresee as the emerging law in this field. In general, the courts have avoided dictating to colleges and universities what administrative procedures they should follow; however, they have held that administrative decisions must recognize two minimal procedural requirements: "uniformity of application and fair administration of the regulations" (Gellhorn and Hornby 1974, p. 997). One observer believes that where state

*This discussion is based upon the California Supreme Court's description of Davis' admissions procedures.

agencies are concerned (for example, in the area of state-supported schools), a new judicial standard for review is emerging in cases where equal protection of the law is at issue. He suggests that this new standard:

> leaves to the legislature the determination of the ultimate purposes of state programs and policies. Thus under this approach the courts effectively accept as given the validity of the asserted state jurisdiction for [its] classification (Redish 1975, p. 353, citing Gunther).

Other writers outline standards for law school admissions based on what they believe the courts may require. Gellhorn and Hornby (1974) recommend that at a minimum state-supported institutions should develop "ascertainable" standards or criteria for admissions, disseminate these to applicants, and apply them uniformly and impartially.* Although this suggestion seems self-evident, it may not be a practice generally followed. A survey of law school applicants showed that a majority believed the factors for admission were never made clear by some or most of the schools to which they applied, and that more than one-third of these applicants had difficulty in getting information about the school; in addition, more than one-fifth of these students, including 44 percent of the women applicants, believed they were the victim of discrimination (Gellhorn and Hornby 1974, p. 1002-1003). The authors suggest that "ascertainable" standards include: *First*, indications of what criteria are considered and the weights assigned to them. The school should also tell rejected applicants what the minimum cut-off score was, although this information need not be given before decisions are made. *Second*, these criteria must be shown to measure qualities that are relevant to the *"legitimate educational objectives of the state law school"* (p. 1000). *Third*, when criteria are articulated, applicants should have an opportunity to show that these criteria are "inappropriate for assessing their qualities" (p. 1008). *Fourth*, on request, a rejected applicant should get a specific statement of reasons for rejection. And *fifth*, if the information used to determine denial of admission was not furnished by the applicant, he should get access to this information and have an opportunity to explain or contradict it (pp. 1002-1010).

Professional schools are also experimenting with different admissions criteria to select candidates who will best fulfill the school's philos-

*There have been reports of outside interference in the admissions process. For example, a student whose qualifications were below minimal requirements but who was the son of a wealthy businessman was jumped over other applicants and admitted to a state medical school (Watkins 1976; see also O'Neil 1974).

ophy or social goals in their chosen careers (College of Human Medicine; Elliott 1975; Chaisson 1976). For example, the College of Human Medicine of Michigan State University is an experimental college whose policies and procedures are being developed in response to three basic questions:

> What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do medical students need to acquire now in order to practice quality medicine 10, 20, 30, or 40 years from now? How can Michigan State University best help medical students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes? How can Michigan State University most effectively contribute to improve health care in Michigan now and in the future? (College of Human Medicine Bulletin).

This school asks admissions staff to evaluate the student in terms of questions such as the relevance of the student's personal qualities to the school's goals and needs, the applicant's awareness of health and social problems, and his ability for independent learning, problem-solving, and human interaction (College of Human Medicine 1977).

In another example, a specialized program for the training of primary care physicians at Florida A & M and Florida State University has developed criteria that it believes aid in identifying applicants who might successfully enter the primary care field. The Program in Medical Sciences has found that certain factors together could predict a student's inclination for primary care in underserved areas and that these same factors would limit the student's chances for admission under traditional criteria. The factors favorable for the primary care field in rural areas include low socioeconomic status and a personality that fits the "sensing" rather than "intuitive" type of student who is admitted to medical school. The "sensing" personality generally scores lower on the Medical College Admissions test, does as well as the "intuitive" student during the clinical education period, is more likely to practice in a small community and select a primary care specialty, and represents a smaller proportion of medical classes now than 20 years ago (Elliott 1975). Given these considerations, the Program in Medical Sciences assigns extra points to such applicants to make them competitive.

Summary

New legal requirements compel colleges and universities to examine their admissions policies and practice to ascertain whether these have a discriminatory impact on any part of the student population. These requirements may provide the impetus to change any practices that are discriminatory in intent or effect, and they may also foster new

efforts to develop admissions criteria that are closely related to an education program's goals.

For undergraduate and graduate schools, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires that all education programs and activities be assessed for their possible discriminatory effect on both female and male students and that actions be taken to eliminate any discriminatory impact. In the admissions area, the law specifically requires that acceptances not be predicated on numerical or percentage quotas for either sex or on the personal status of the applicant. Also, financial aid, which may affect admissions decisions, must also be distributed equitably. There has been no public indication that these admissions requirements pose any particular problems for colleges and universities.

However, professional schools face unresolved legal questions that have raised important problems for institutional admissions policies and practices. Ironically, the legal issues have emerged from institutional efforts to respond to their perceived responsibilities to their profession and to society. Many schools have developed special admissions programs for students who would not be competitive in the growing applicant pools of the 1970's. Admission for these students through such programs results in rejection for other students who may be more qualified by traditional criteria but not eligible for the special programs. The Supreme Court will hear these issues this fall in *Bakke v. the Regents of the University of California.*

Professional schools are also engaged in developing new criteria for admissions that would enhance the selection of students who have the characteristics most in accord with their educational program's goals. Their efforts may lead to new methods of assessing applicants at a time when the applicant pool as a whole is generally well-qualified for admissions by traditional criteria.

The Student Perspective in Admissions

In recent years, "student consumerism" has become an active movement in higher education. Student consumerism advocates point out that the student, because of his financial, time, and personal investment, is the prime consumer of postsecondary education. Consequently, as a consumer, the student merits fair treatment in relationship to his college. This relationship begins with the recruitment and admissions process, during which period the student needs adequate factual information that will enhance his ability to make a satisfying educational choice. Viewed in this light, student consumerism is in harmony with the new marketing theories described in chapter two — both the institution and the student have an interest in assuring a successful match between a student's needs and abilities and the institution's capabilities.

This chapter will focus on recent developments in the student consumerism field. It will also briefly discuss alternative approaches in admissions procedures that may more actively involve the student in admissions decisions.

Student as Consumer

Supporters of student consumer interests are concerned with three major areas in admissions: (1) specific and adequate information on the college's educational program and its student body; (2) equitable treatment in the admissions process; and (3) clear and comprehensive information on financial aid programs.

Information Needs

Information provided to prospective students has been severely criticized:

> college catalogs describe the characteristics of the student body and the college environment in general terms carefully chosen to convey only positive impressions . . . Information about the instructional process and financial matters is more elusive. Data on teaching effectiveness are usually published only when gathered by students themselves, usually in a nonsystemative way (Stark 1976, p. 62).

Dissatisfaction with such information has given rise to new efforts to discover and make available to students the kinds of information they see as necessary for an informed choice. Researchers have found

that students can be articulate about what information they need. For example, Kinnick (1975) surveyed more than 300 high school and post-secondary students to develop a taxonomy of information needs. More than 2,000 information items were submitted, from which a taxonomy of 269 items emerged. The survey, which also solicited responses from admissions officers, found that students rated some items higher in importance than did admissions personnel. In the area of teachers and instruction, students were concerned with faculty qualifications, teaching and grading methods used, and the possibility of outside tutoring; on the school's reputation, students showed interest in the school's financial situation and any outside recognition it may have received for its programs (Kinnick 1975).

In response to the need for better information resources, The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) launched a project on Better Information for Student Choice in which eleven institutions have been developing methods for improving the quality of information that a prospective student receives from a college. Barat College (Lake Forest, Illinois), a participant in this project, has developed a "prospectus" for students that is regarded as a model for supplying the kinds of information students need (*Barat. A Prospectus* 1976). The prospectus does not contain information on faculty personnel and courses offered; instead it

> attempts to answer a *next* set of questions: how often are the courses offered? What is the size of classes? Will I get to know a faculty member? Is it easy or hard to arrange an independent study? What about social life? How much does a year at Barat really cost? Can I get scholarship assistance? (*Barat* . . . 1976, p. 2).

The prospectus also contains unusual, brief, and candid sketches of each department, which may be more helpful to prospective students than the standard listing of course offerings; for example, in the biology department, "Courses reported to be tough, teachers to offer extra help"; in political science, "Flexible, well taught program. . . emphasis on women's rights and changing roles" (*Barat* . . . 1976, p. 11).

Admissions Process

From the student as consumer's perspective, admissions practices and procedures should be clearly articulated, and the admissions process itself should be characterized by efficiency and timely notification of the applicant's status (El-Khawas 1976). The American Council on

Education offers some recommendations on how to achieve these objectives. Institutions should:

- Review the clarity and accuracy of existing descriptions of admissions requirements, application procedures and deadlines, and notification dates regarding acceptance.
- Provide applicants with statements of institutional policies governing use of waiting lists for admissions, methods of appealing admissions and financial-aid determinations, and procedures for reapplying or for applying for second-term admissions.
- Establish informal mechanisms for peer-information exchange. Prospective and enrolled students might be given opportunities to talk with one another, or student-written accounts of the academic environment and campus life might be available to prospective students (El-Khawas 1976, p. 6-7).

Financial Aid Information

Student consumerism has drawn support from the Federal government in the area of financial aid as a result of the government's interest in the viability of its student financial aid programs. Most recently, legislation has been passed requiring institutions to provide students with accurate information on the financial aid programs available to them. Under the Higher Education Amendments of 1976 (Part D, section 131), covered institutions are required to make available to presently enrolled students and to other students on request information about:

> (A) the student financial assistance programs available to students who enroll at such institutions,
> (B) the method by which such assistance is distributed among student recipients. . .,
> (C) any means. . . by which application for student financial assistance is made. . .,
> (D) the rights and responsibilities of students receiving financial assistance under this title,
> (E) the cost of attending the institution. . .,
> (F) the refund policy of the institution. . .,
> (G) the academic program of the institution. . .,
> (H) [a person designated as responsible for assisting current and prospective students in obtaining the above information]

Such complete information may not be readily available to students. The findings of a recent survey (Willett 1976), although criticized for its methodology, suggest that institutions are generally not prepared to respond completely to requests for information on financial aid. Posing as a prospective student, Willett sent letters to sixty-eight postsecondary institutions in the Boston area requesting

information on student financial aid. The schools included in the survey were identified as eligible to participate in one or more federal financial aid programs: Basic Educational Opportunity Grants; Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; College Work-Study; National Direct Student Loan; and Guaranteed Student Loan. Of the sixty-eight schools, twenty-two did not reply to the letter. Moreover, about one-third of those responding did not mention some of the programs in which they were eligible to participate.

The survey letter did not specifically request information on educational costs, and such information was not forthcoming; only twenty-three of the forty-six responding institutions included information on tuition costs as well as fees. Only one school also estimated average yearly living costs for commuting students living with their parents and for dormitory residents; this school also suggested a basic budget. From these replies, the author concluded that she did not have enough information to arrive at an estimate of her educational costs or to approximate the amount of financial aid available. She further observes:

> Since useful information on financial assistance is unavailable to the potential student before the point of purchase, student aid cannot be an active factor in the student's choice, and therefore student access to post-secondary education may be limited significantly. If information on financial aid does not exist for the potential student in any meaningful way, financial assistance itself cannot either, until after the commitments have been made (Willett 1976, p. 4).

Alternative Approaches

Current admissions efforts appear to be largely directed toward developing satisfactory applicant pools based on the traditional standards of test scores and grades, and toward implementing a successful marketing strategy. On the undergraduate level little attention appears to be given to developing new kinds of admissions criteria. For undergraduate institutions interested in such an approach, research is available on alternative criteria for admissions decisions.

For example, admissions officers might investigate the possibility of incorporating student self-reports into their admissions decisions. Baird (1976) has reviewed 30 years of research on the accuracy and usefulness of student self-reports and finds that they are credible and about as useable as school-reported grades for predicting success in college. Biographical information provided by the student can also be used as a tool for assessing student performance and perhaps may be more incisive than traditional measures. That is, general biographical information may be used as a "moderator," *i.e.* as "a given

variable [that] may predict a criterion better for certain subgroups than for others" (Baird 1976, p. 13). Using the moderator method, analysts may find that SAT-verbal scores are the best predictor for humanities majors, while high school grades may best predict for science majors; researchers have also found that moderator analysis can help to identify over- and underachievements as well as students with special creative talents. Biographical information may also be used to identify "the variables that predict the differences in grade performance in science, humanities, [etc.] . . . . The predictors subsequently selected are those which, combined with earlier selections, produce the highest average multiple correlation with these criteria of difference" (Baird 1976, p. 14).

Baird notes that use of biographical data in the admissions process presents some basic problems: How should an institution deal with the fact that women's grades are more predictable and are likely to be higher than those of "academically equally able men?" (p. 14); Should women be given the benefit of this fact so that more of them are admitted than men, or should methods be used or policy decisions made on how to offset this advantage? One approach to this problem may be to use biographic information in admissions decisions after a certain number of students have been admitted by traditional methods "until a predetermined level of probability of success was reached" (Baird 1976, p. 16). Then, Baird suggests, biographical information may be used in the decisions for the remaining applicants.

In another approach to admission procedures, some colleges are giving the student a more active role in the application process. For example, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has a "negotiated admissions policy" under which a student is virtually responsible for admitting himself to the institution. An applicant must meet minimal requirements with respect to high school courses taken and standardized tests. After the application form is submitted, WPI provides the student with an opportunity to visit the campus and meet with admissions personnel, talk with faculty, and in general, learn about WPI's program. The applicant is also provided with profiles of past and present students' academic performance. If the student then decides to admit himself and is not applying for financial aid, he completes the admissions process by giving a $200 nonrefundable deposit. Admission for any one of five beginning terms is contingent upon space availability. If a student's application indicates that he does not have a realistic chance of succeeding at the institute, WPI will respond with a letter expressing its concern and return the deposit (WPI 1976).

At Bowdoin College, submission of standardized test scores for

admissions has been an optional requirement since 1970, when it was the only remaining mandatory criterion for admission. The college felt then that it was unjust to rely so heavily on these scores, and decided to humanize the admissions process by making scores an optional criterion (Moll 1972). It was also believed that the scores discriminated against minorities; the college had discovered that some satisfactory student performance at the college brought into question the correlation between scores and student performance. After two years of this new procedure, the admissions office found that most applicants still submitted scores. Those students who do not submit scores fall into two categories: (1) those who think their scores are too low to reflect their abilities and would therefore rather rely on other information; and (2) those who do well on tests but like the idea of not being judged on a one-time test performance. Bowdoin appears satisfied with this innovation, which evokes more personal, detailed information from students: "Bowdoin is discovering in the large muddy middle of the applicant pool some colorful and talented human beings who otherwise appear good, but similar, on academic grounds" (Moll 1972, p. 39).

Summary

Student consumerism advocates are promoting efforts to make colleges more responsive to students' informational needs. These needs are particularly critical during the application and admissions period, when students and their parents must make major decisions on how the student will invest his financial resources and his personal energies for the next four years.

New directions in student consumerism may be both voluntary and compulsory. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education project on Better Information for Student Choice promises to be an innovator in the development of resource material from which colleges can develop their own methods of providing students with better information about their programs. Barat College's "prospectus" serves as a model of the kinds of information students may seek from a college. Institutions may also make use of available research on student informational needs to tailor their prospectuses to these needs and their unique characteristics. The impetus for providing adequate information about student financial aid comes from new federal requirements. By their inclusion in the Higher Education Amendments of 1976 these provisions suggest that, to date, adequate information has been unavailable to students. Recent research on financial aid information supports this view.

Greater student involvement in the admissions process may also take other forms. Research indicates that colleges may successfully use student biographical data in their admissions decisions. Although such an approach may present some problems, it does offer methods for better assessing and predicting student performance. Colleges may also initiate admissions practices that assign the student greater responsibility and participation in the admissions process.

Conclusion

Educators have directed their interest in admissions issues in the 1970's to the practical problems of developing satisfactory applicant pools from which they can select a freshman class suitable for their educational programs and goals. This focus suggests that admissions discussions have withdrawn from the highly charged questions of the 1960's that were concerned with the social dimensions of admissions policies and procedures. However, this shift in emphasis may signal a recasting of basic admissions issues in terms more appropriate to the educational realities of the 1970's; that is, the new emphasis is on how higher education may best serve the individual student's needs rather than the needs of students as part of a particular social group.

This new direction may in large part be attributed to the changes in enrollment levels and in the mix of students that higher education institutions have experienced in the past 10 years. From a period of peak enrollment in the 1960's, when colleges were hard-pressed to select applicants from a highly qualified applicant pool, there has been a gradual decline in the extent of the applicant pool and the level of enrollments, accompanied by changes in student ability as measured by traditional evaluation criteria. Therefore, it is likely that further constraints will recur.

Given this forecast, institutions are seeking means of attracting students that are compatible with the tenor of higher education and with their particular character. New marketing procedures that try to reconcile students' and institutions' interests and abilities seem to satisfy this need and signal a shift in emphasis from students in a social group to students as individuals.

This approach requires institutions to assess their educational purposes and their capacity for implementing their educational objectives. In contrast to the marketing stereotype that holds "the seller sells whatever the public wants," this educational marketing strategy is based on the idea that a college that has realistically assessed its educational program is in a better position to articulate its advantages and to attract students. This marketing approach is also fortuitously developing during a period when students have become more consumer-oriented and are demanding greater specificity from institutions about their educational programs and their ability to satisfy students' needs.

The 1960's discussions about higher education's role as a social institution have not completely abated. This issue is still being explored, particularly in professional schools such as law and medicine, which are experiencing phenomenal growth in the number of well-qualified applicants for admission to their programs. Along with this growth, professional schools have become concerned about their responsibilities for meeting social needs through their admissions process and their educational programs. To this end, special admissions programs have become a widespread practice among professional schools but have been subject to legal challenges by well-qualified applicants who are not eligible for admission under them. A Supreme Court decision in *Bakke* may either determine the fate of such programs and establish guidelines for future admissions efforts or be limited in scope, applying only to *Bakke* and similar programs. In either case, the development of such admissions programs is certain to remain an important issue for a considerable time.

For the future, fluctuations in enrollments and ability levels of high school graduates establish the boundaries within which admissions officers and their institutions can affect the admissions process. However, within these boundaries there is opportunity to develop new approaches to admissions problems. Some innovations are underway, and the potential for new initiatives is already present, based on existing research on different methods for assessing students' aptitudes and abilities.

The satisfactory resolution of admissions issues is fundamental to the viability of any higher education institution, since the makeup of the student classes has a strong effect on institutional character and future development. Admissions officers have the opportunity to develop their roles beyond the practical concerns of meeting enrollment goals and programs in ways that best promote an institution's educational assets, serve identifiable needs of students in the applicant pool, and provide a satisfactory merger between institutional and student interests.

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